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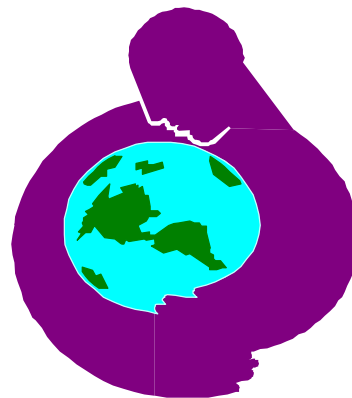
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Technical Report

Working with Asian and Hispanic Limited Resource Farmers and Ranchers



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Working with Asian and Hispanic Limited Resource Farmers and Ranchers

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Introduction

Limited resource farmers, as described by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, have one or more of the following characteristics:

1. Gross farm sales average \$40,000 or less in each of the last three years, and there is no non-farm income.
2. Total household net income, farm and non-farm, is 75 percent or less of the non-metropolitan median income level for the state or county.
3. Lack of access to capital, labor, or equipment.
4. Farm or ranch size is significantly smaller than average size.
5. Social, cultural, customs or language barriers, minimal awareness of USDA programs, limited management skills, the level of formal education is below the county average or undereducated, and are less likely to take business risks and adopt new technology.

This guide deals with the fifth category, particularly Hispanic¹ and Southeast Asian limited resource farmers. In spite of their growing numbers, many Hispanics and Southeast Asians are being bypassed by the institutions that were set up to serve them. This is because agencies and institutions have not changed along with the technological and societal changes that have occurred during the past half-century. Government policies change in response to political pressure. Limited resource farmers usually cannot bring about such pressure.

This guide was developed over a 15-year period. It is based on the work of professionals in Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Services Agency, Farmers' Home Administration, Federal Crop Insurance, non-profit organizations, and other groups involved with limited resource farmers.

From our experiences working with Hispanic and Southeast Asian farmers, we have gathered a great deal of information and developed empathy for the communities. We conducted informal interviews with individuals and with groups, studied 11 farms run by Hispanics, developed case studies of 200 Hispanic and 400 Southeast Asian limited resource farmers, and studied several marketing organizations that purchase from these farmers. We conducted training sessions and workshops for Hispanics and Southeast Asians, as well as other limited resource farmers.

Both ethnic minority groups preferred training specifically geared to their ethnic groups, sometimes conducted in their native languages. We found in this project that limited resource farmers often do not understand the functions of and the differences between the agencies that are supposed to serve them.

¹ "Hispanic" is a label used to group individuals living in the U.S. who trace their backgrounds to Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America or Spain. It is used mainly by the government and the media, not by the individuals themselves. "Hispanic" denotes an ethnic group, not a race, since Hispanics belong to all races. When working with Hispanic farmers, determine the "ethnic label" the farmers prefer to use (Mexican, Mexican-American, Cuban, Salvadorean, etc.).

We arranged workshops for agency professionals to share their extensive experiences, activities, and accomplishments. This bringing together and sharing of information among the agencies' staffs was especially beneficial.

The guide begins with a checklist for you to fill out so you can determine where you need additional help in working with limited resource farmers.

The guide ends with a bibliography of publications from the various agencies serving limited resource farmers. Users of this guide can benefit greatly from reading these additional materials.

Checklist

These questions will raise other questions. Searching for the answers will prepare you to plan and carry out a productive program with limited resource farmers.

Mission and Commitment

1. Do you have a copy of the Natural Resources Conservation Service mission statement?

Yes No

Is working with limited resource farmers included in the mission statement?

Yes No

3. Are the goals and objectives of the limited resource farmer program clear and concise?

Yes No

Are they understood and accepted by all levels of the agency's staff, including the professional staff and the administrators?

Yes No

5. How is this commitment demonstrated?

Yes No

By support and encouragement?

Yes No

By an adequate budget and other resources?

Yes No

By official recognition?

Yes No

Clientele

6. Do you know the limited resource farmers in your area?

Yes No

How do you identify them?

By the area in which they live?

Yes No

By the type of farm or the crops they grow?

Yes No

By ethnic grouping? (Hispanic, Asian, etc.)

Yes No

Because they are part-time farmers?

Yes No

By income level?

Yes No

By the size of their farms?

Yes No

8. Do you have them on a contact list?

Yes No

9. Do they know you?

Yes No

10. Do you share contact lists and information about limited resource farmers with other agencies and groups?

Yes No

11. Have you compared your count of limited resource farmers in your area with information provided in the latest Census of Agriculture?

Yes No

12. How much do you know about the reading and writing skills of your client?

Yes No

13. Do you plan to evaluate materials for readability?

Yes No

14. Can you identify any barriers to clientele participation related to ethnicity, cultural background, gender, etc.?

Yes No

Culture and Farming Practices of the Target Groups

15. If you need to assist non-English speaking farmers in your area, how can you overcome the language barrier?

Yes No

16. Do you understand the cultural characteristics of the Hispanic and Southeast Asian limited resource farmers in your area?

Yes No

17. Are you trained in cross-cultural communication and involvement?

Yes No

18. Does the limited resource farmer community have a social organization different from that of the larger community?

Yes No

19. What is the power structure within the community?

Yes No

20. Who are the leaders?

Yes No

21. To whom do the limited resource farmers look for information and assistance?

Yes No

22. Are there unique problems for the limited resource farmer in your area? Are they:

New to the county?

Yes No

New to the area?

Yes No

New to farming?

Yes No

New to types of agriculture in the area?

Yes No

23. Do you know their farming backgrounds in:

Commercial farming?

Yes No

Small farms?

Yes No

Hiring farm workers?

Yes No

Needs Assessment

24. What are the limited resource farmers' special needs?

Yes No

25. Do you have programs to fill these needs?

Yes No

26. Do the perceived needs of the farmers fit the goals and objectives of the agency programs?

Yes No

27. Do you have a plan to educate (sell your program to) limited resource farmers?

Yes No

28. Can you change the program to meet the needs of the farmer?

Yes No

Fitting the Program to the Farmer

29. How well does your program fit the farm operation?

Yes No

30. Does the operator have the economic resources and expertise to install and maintain the practice?

Yes No

31. Will the program improve the profitability or net worth of the operation?

Yes No

32. Can the farm operation be modified or redirected?

Yes No

33. Does it benefit the family and community?

Yes No

34. Can the program be carried to completion by the farmer or agency?

Yes No

Educational Approaches

35. What educational tools are best for working with limited resource farmers?

Score from 1 (least useful) to 10 (most useful):

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Radio programs										
Television programs										
News stories										
Newsletters										
Field visits										
Demonstrations										
Educational meetings										
Project groups/committees										
Advisory boards/committees										

Program Resources and Methods

36. Do you have the necessary resources for increasing your programming for limited resource farmers?

	Adequate	Need more
Personnel		
Training for personnel		
Specialist assistance		
Educational materials		
Educational equipment		
Videos		
Printed translations		
Demonstration materials		
Specialized field equipment		

37. Are you multiplying your effectiveness by cooperating with:

Other agencies serving limited resource farmers?

Yes No

Your own and other agencies' staffs?

Yes No

Administration?

Yes No

The community?

Yes No

Evaluation

38. Are the goals and objectives of your limited resource farmer program understood and documented so you can evaluate your progress as well as the final achievement?

Yes No

39. Do you have a realistic timetable?

Yes No

Does your timetable fit the limited resource farmers' timetables?

Yes No

Mission

Most executives don't realize what's involved in creating a mission statement that truly represents deeply shared values and vision at all levels of the organization. It takes patience, a long-term perspective, and meaningful involvement—and few organizations rank high in those virtues. Many organizations have a mission statement, but typically people aren't committed to it because they aren't involved in developing it, consequently it's not part of the culture. Culture, by definition, assumes shared vision and values, as represented by a mission statement put together and understood and implemented by all levels of the organization. (Covey, Stephen R., 1991, Principle Centered Leadership)

It is a constant effort for staff members to keep in perspective how their projects fit into the over-all program of the agency. The workers have to feel that others in the agency know and understand the importance of their efforts. If not, staff soon feel isolated and that their efforts are unimportant. This is common in government agencies, if work assignments come from the top down and frequently must be added to already full workloads.

The mission cannot remain static; neither can goals and objectives. Change occurs in the demands and needs of clientele. Change also occurs in response to political agendas to which the agency must respond. Therefore, agencies must be continually developing goals and objectives at all levels.

Staff in the field often comment that **they** know what they're doing, but "the state and federal levels don't have a clue." Such grumbling reinforces the constant need for mission clarification.

Commitment

For a limited resource farmer program to succeed, the policy makers in an organization as well as individual workers must be committed to its success.

Administrators must show their commitment by providing appropriate funding for training, supplies, equipment, meetings and workshops, publicity, consultants, and interagency cooperation. They need to show staff that their work matters by providing incentives such as bonuses, or recognition.

Staff members also must be committed to and understand their importance to the program. Most USDA and Cooperative Extension personnel are experts in technical agriculture. But to develop a limited resource farmer program with ethnic groups, including Hispanic and Southeast Asian farmers, requires additional skills. All employees involved with the program need to be willing to learn new methods, be sensitive to the cultures, practices, beliefs, family systems and goals of various ethnic groups, be willing to change, be able to communicate in the languages of the farmers (with translators when necessary), be patient, and be willing to commit their time.

Only when both the agency and the workers are committed to a successful limited resource farmer program is success possible.

Clientele

The following sources have proven most useful for determining who the limited resource farmers are:

Census of Agriculture

The Census of Agriculture is one method we have of determining the number of farms and their characteristics. It can be useful in gaining an overall perspective, since it breaks down the farms according to income categories, as well as size by acreage, and indicates whether operators are full-time or part-time farmers. It lists the various commodities, giving the number of farms involved with each. Its main weakness is it is taken only every five years, so some groups may be left out, especially those who are just beginning, such as immigrant Southeast Asians and Hispanics. Nevertheless, it gives a general overview of the agricultural situation.

Lists of Cooperators

One of the best ways to obtain a list of farmers is for agencies to share their lists of cooperators. If the USDA agencies (NRCS, Farm Services Agency, Cooperative Extension, Farmers' Home Administration) combine their knowledge, most limited resource farmers will be included. In California, for the last 15 years, there have been six Cooperative Extension Small Farm Advisors, covering nine counties where the majority of the limited resource farmers operate. They have developed lists of farmers meeting the limited resource farmer definition.

Agricultural Commissioner

The Agricultural Commissioners' offices are excellent places to find names of farmers. Farmers apply for permits to use pesticides or chemicals at the commissioners' offices. Lists of applicants are available as computer printouts for a small charge. The lists give little information about the farmers, but they'll give you a good start on gathering information about farmers in your area.

County Assessor

Another source of information to determine ownership patterns in the county, although it takes considerable time and would probably only be used with special studies, is the County Assessors' offices. In many counties all of the assessor's records are computerized and are available for a small charge.

Marketing Organizations

Marketing organizations include cooperatives, private companies, brokers, and others who deal with farmers. They can identify and help contact limited resource farmers. One successful use of a marketing organization was obtaining from them a list of all farmers in an area who marketed certain types of vegetables.

Sales and Service Companies

Sales and service companies are good sources of information if you develop a rapport with the salespeople.

Social and Business Organizations

Social and business organizations are a good source of identification and contact. Among these are the non-profit organizations which, as their goal, assist ethnic or low-income families and individuals.

Use the least complex and quickest method for finding the limited resource farmers in your area. You don't need very detailed information to start working with the farmers.

When contacting the farmers, proceed with caution, especially if you are making contact with them rather than them making contact with you (through another agency's list, for example). If the farmers have come forward for help from you, they have identified themselves as receptive to your efforts. When people need to be persuaded to be cooperators, you need to be able to motivate them to go along with your program.

Understanding the Culture and Farming Practices of the Target Groups

Language

If your goal is to help limited resource farmers become part of the mainstream, you have to help them communicate and participate with the English-speaking business community, rather than to try to get the business community to adapt to their different languages.

Communicating with a non-English speaking group is obviously difficult. But, there are several ways to deal with this problem. Some contend that everything should be in Spanish for a Spanish-speaking audience. Others say it should all be in English. After a great deal of work with Hispanic and Southeast Asian farmers in California, we learned that the best answer lies somewhere between. Bilingual farm advisors found that written material in both languages informs better and is more acceptable to farmers than either language alone. Also, the farmers learned more from verbal communication than from written materials. For Spanish speakers, the best method for disbursing information is radio programs and announcements in Spanish, meetings, conferences, demonstrations, and individual contacts in both languages.

Also, be aware of jargon. A soil scientist or economist, for instance, generally uses words and phrases perfectly understandable to others in his field but they may be unintelligible to outsiders, particularly those who don't understand much English. Translators need to take this into account or their work will be of little use to the clientele.

Suggestions for English to Spanish Translation

Mistakes made in the past with translations can help you avoid such mistakes in the future. One problem is the difference between classic Spanish and the "valley Spanish" spoken by farm workers. The most useful publications have been generated by farm advisors who work closely with farm workers—newsletters and other publications printed in two columns—one English, the other Spanish.

With any vital language, there are vocabulary variations. When translating, there are four possible solutions to regional variations: use all appropriate variations of a word; target vocabulary variations to each subgroup; avoid colloquialisms; use alternative phrases. The following guidelines will help translators:

- Use simple English, approximately third-grade level.
- Use short and simple sentences of fewer than 16 words.
- Use nouns rather than pronouns.
- Avoid colloquialisms.
- Avoid possessive forms (his, theirs, etc.).
- Use specific rather than general terms.
- Use the active rather than the passive voice.

- Avoid the subjective (verb forms with could and would).
- Use redundant wording to clarify the context and meaning of a phrase whenever possible.

Bilingual Communication Tips

- Do not talk/write in acronyms and keep technical jargon to a minimum.
- Have a local farmer review the meaning of words and ease of understanding technical information.
- Budget funds to develop a dictionary for Spanish (or other language) technical terms and phrases. Also use photos to ensure that the meaning is clear.
- Provide incentives and rewards for non-Spanish speaking employees to learn Spanish.
- Communicate in language a farmer will understand.
- Learn local terminology for technical terms from farmers.
- Listen to local farmers.
- Natural Resources Conservation Service

Translation Techniques

There are three translation techniques:

1. One-way translation: a bilingual person translates the original into the target language. Usually the translation corresponds to the denotative rather than the connotative meaning of the original.
2. By committee: two or more translators, working separately, translate the original into the target language.
3. Double translation or back translation: one person translates the original into the target language. The second translates it back to the original language.

Translation probes are used to test the accuracy and appropriateness of a translation. These include field pretesting, asking bilingual individuals questions about both language versions, performance checks, and evaluation by experts.

Choosing Translators

The success of a translation depends on the qualifications of the translator. Because someone is a member of a certain ethnic group or speaks a language other than English at home, he may not be a qualified translator. A recent immigrant might not be appropriately familiar with English or with regional variations in his native tongue. The following suggestions may help.

- When choosing a translator preference should be given to coordinate bilinguals (those who learned the languages at different times, and preferably in two different cultures) over compound bilinguals (those who learned the languages at the same time). The first can better articulate the cultural meaning of words.

- Experienced translators, while more costly than volunteers or office staff, will produce a higher quality product.
- Commercial translation services usually are geared toward producing fast versions of commercial products. Be careful when contracting with these companies. Request samples of translations similar to the one you will be requesting.

One good example of a translation that failed is that of an airline that tried to lure passengers with the phrase “sentado en cuero.” The original message was intended to emphasize the comfort of sitting on leather seats, but the translation encouraged consumers to “sit naked”! Or, General Motors, when trying to market their “Nova” automobile in Latin America, did not know the name “Nova” in Spanish means “no va” (doesn’t go)!

How to Communicate Across Cultures

- Speak slowly, audibly and distinctly.
- Use simple words and avoid jargon or slang.
- Learn some simple phrases, such as greetings.
- Learn to listen better. Don’t let accents get in the way. Give time for the person to mentally translate what you said.
- Do not judge people on their accents or language fluency.
- Respect silence. Don’t feel you need to fill every gap.
- Avoid making ethnic jokes.
- Discard every assumption you can.
- Learn about new cultures.
- Be patient. Keep smiling!

Better Communication Comes From

YOUR HEAD (being aware)

YOUR HEART (caring/respect)

YOUR HABITS (acquiring new and more flexible behaviors)

Cultural Characteristics

Cultural differences affect all of us. They are also part of our communication problem. Some things to remember:

- Cultural differences among people cause different perceptions and values among them.
- One set of cultural values is not necessarily better than another.
- Public education and services should be **effectively** available to people regardless of their cultural differences.

- People should not be required (explicitly or implicitly) to abandon their cultural heritage as a condition for receiving public education and services.
- Appropriate communication and working relationships between people of different cultures require mutual respect and some understanding of each others' culture.
- When people hear directly from others regarding the others' culture and values, they tend to be more respectful of them, especially if the exchange takes place between personal acquaintances.
- Personal acquaintance and communication, over time, usually increase trust amongst the participants.
- Personal trust of individuals from another culture tends to make a person more respectful of that culture generally.
- Personal and cultural respect fosters more frequent and effective working relationships among people who have mutual interests.
- Simply putting individuals from two cultures together does not necessarily result in cross-cultural understanding. In fact, without careful facilitation and sensitivity, the opposite may occur.
- In spite of our best intentions and efforts, we may make cross-cultural "goofs." Cross-cultural learning involves making mistakes and learning from them.

Hispanic Cultural Values

- **Allocentrism or collectivism:** Hispanics prefer interpersonal relationships in groups that are nurturing, loving, supportive, and respectful. This can be of significant when designing and implementing a program. Unfortunately, this value can move Hispanics to provide researchers with biased responses or socially desirable answers in order to promote the nurturing nature of the encounter.
- **Simpatia:** Emphasizes the need for behaviors that promote smooth and pleasant social relationships. It moves the individual to show a certain level of conformity and empathy for the feelings of other people, and to behave with dignity and respect towards others, striving to achieve harmony in interpersonal relations. These two values, allocentrism and simpatia, may be responsible for greater socially desirable responses by Hispanic respondents and for differences in how aggressive and assertive behaviors are perceived by Hispanics.
- **Familialism:** This is one of the most important culture-specific values of Hispanics. Recent research has shown that familialism, together with a desire for a better life and a belief in self-determination, is one of the key Hispanic values. This value involves strong identification with and attachment to the nuclear and extended families and strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity among members of the same family. Familialism also manifests itself in close relationships and involvement with fictive kin (compadres and comadres or co-parents). Researchers have found that appeals to family

values or incentives, such as a small gift for the children or relatives, can motivate Hispanics to participate in a program or project.

- **Power distance:** This cultural value, a measure of interpersonal power or influence that exists between two individuals, supports the notion that societies have powerful individuals as a result of inherent traits or of inherited or acquired characteristics. The maintenance of personal respect (*respeto*) in interpersonal relations allows individuals to feel that their personal power, whatever it may be, is being acknowledged. This is particularly important in the treatment of strangers (e.g., when to address individuals using *usted* (formal “you”) or *tu* (familiar “you”).
- **Personal space:** In general Hispanics prefer less physical space when they interact with others. They are less likely to feel that their personal space has been invaded when a stranger comes close to them. Hispanics may find non-Hispanics cold and distant because of their need for more physical distance.
- **Gender roles:** Much has been written about Hispanic males and *machismo* and women being submissive. While these stereotypical assumptions may not be valid, it is important to be aware that these attitudes may be present, although not prevalent.
- **Time orientation:** Traditionally, time is an imprecise concept in Latin America. Hispanics tend to have a more flexible attitude toward time. This may have to do with Hispanics placing greater value on the quality of interpersonal relationships than on the length of time in which they take place. Being highly efficient or time conscious may be perceived as impolite or insulting to Hispanics. Time commitments are considered desirable objectives but not binding promises.
- **Become familiar with the community:** Before planning, developing, publicizing or implementing a program, and in order to establish legitimacy, it is critical to understand Hispanics and their communities. In addition to information and data readily available, it is useful to know the names of places frequented by Hispanics, preferred shopping and recreational areas, names of adult education programs, and names of social and community organizations serving them.

Definitions of Prejudicial “-isms”

In relations between different racial and cultural groups some individuals tend to think or act in ways that belittle people from other racial or cultural groups. Here are some common words relating to such situations along with definitions.

Stereotyping Assuming, until there is other evidence, that someone will think or behave in a certain way because he or she is a member of a particular racial or cultural group.

Prejudice An attitude that a person from a particular racial or cultural group is inferior in some way because he or she is a member of that group.

Discrimination A prejudiced action by a person or a group which excludes or limits access for people of a particular racial or cultural group from otherwise available resources, events, places, or opportunities.

Racism A pattern of prejudiced actions that put and keep people of a racial (or, stretching the meaning, cultural) group at a disadvantage compared to people of other groups; or failure to protect the discriminated group's property, rights, or other resources.

Institutional Racism A situation where the structures and policies of a society's government, economy, and/or belief systems perpetuates racial (and cultural) discrimination.

Prejudice and discrimination are concepts which apply to other situations besides racial and cultural differences. Humans can develop almost unconscious habits of thinking about others in prejudicial ways—based on the classifications into which we put people. We may make a negative judgment about someone we don't even know because of some factor of appearance or status. Here are some examples:

Weightism	Skinny snakes	Fat slobs
Elitism	Stupid peasants	City slickers
Ageism	Old geezers	Young punks
Lookism	Silly blondes	Hippie freaks
Sexism	Dumb broads	Macho men
Classism	Rich bitches	Welfare bums
Regionalism	Loud-mouthed Texans	Pushy New Yorkers
Nationalism	French frogs	Yankee imperialists
Ethnocentrism	We are "The People"	They are backward

Notice that the phrases are in the plural. When we discriminate against people, not because of our experience with them but because of how they look or what group we fit them into, we are acting on a prejudice—a pre-judgment. Even our language incorporates prejudicial "isms." For example, in the paragraph above, "belittle" (a sizeism) is used.

There is little doubt that all people sometimes discriminate and are sometimes discriminated against, but among the prejudicial "isms" racism probably causes the most unfair suffering.

Organization

Each group has a formal or an informal power structure (organizational network). To be aware of this and how it works will greatly improve the speed of adoption of new ideas and ensure the ultimate success of the program.

Unique Problems

Situations crop up in any educational project that interfere with progress. In working with individuals from different backgrounds, these problems may not be immediately apparent. Two stories help illustrate this.

The concept of time in American industrial society is well understood by most of us. We work and play by the clock. We punch in and punch out of activities, speaking

metaphorically. In the Asian, Hispanic, and Native American culture, activities are based on a different life style.

“My elders told me another aspect of American lifestyle that was hard for them to become accustomed to—the concept of time. In Asian cultures, time is not as important as in western culture. In the old country, people did not have to make appointments to see each other. They are not as time-oriented as people in the United States. The lifestyles were different and my elders felt like they were rushed to get everything done on time. They felt that each day was divided ‘too incrementally.’ They did not see the need to be so ‘time-oriented.’” (Tracy Ly, University of California at Davis graduate student)

“To most traditional Native Americans, events occur ‘in their own time.’ Native Americans who subscribe to the ‘old ways’ are not tied to the world of deadlines, fiscal years, action plans, and the like. This perspective represents a problem to many time-conscious mainstream Americans. The time perspective held by traditional Native Americans makes it especially difficult for long-term resource planners such as SCS (Soil Conservation Service).” Report, Workshop: “Working with Native Americans,” 1988)

Hispanic culture has a similar concept. Knowing something about the reason people react in a certain way can help us understand their actions so we do not have negative feelings about them.

Another interesting example occurred among the Hmong refugees in central California. Health workers were concerned because Southeast Asian women were suffering considerable stress from having to go to the hospital to give birth to their babies. Having their babies in hospitals had never been required of them before coming to this country. When asked the reason for their concern, it was discovered that they thought their babies had to be born in hospitals in order for them to receive birth certificates. The birth certificate was important to them, because they understood it proved their children would be citizens. Once they were shown it was possible to get a birth certificate without going to the hospital, most of their babies were born at home.

Farming

Most limited resource farmers have been involved in farming most of their lives, but they may have been farm workers, or, if immigrants, they may have experienced a completely different type of agricultural production. If you consider this when planning projects and presenting information, you will save yourself a great deal of work.

Helping limited resource farmers adopt new practices is not simple. Patience is important. Trust has to be established before improvements can be made. There are cultural differences that block out our effectiveness. In some cultures people will listen to what a person has to say and act as if they are interested when they really are not—they are acting polite to avoid insulting or hurting the other person’s feelings. Or, in some cultures, people will say they are interested and looking forward to a particular plan when in actuality they do not care about it at all. Some of this reluctance is due to a deep distrust of agencies and government or officials .

There are differences in how people from different cultures receive information. In the U.S. farmers have used NRCS, Cooperative Extension and other agencies as well as commercial businesses as trusted authorities, whereas in other countries, and among some ethnic groups, information/advice is accepted only through family and friends. To bridge this barrier against helpful entities, trust and understanding have to be established.

Cultural Barriers as Seen by a Recent Southeast Asian Immigrant

- Americans are seen as too impersonal, not family oriented enough. Too much paperwork is required, hierarchy and different structures are problems.
- Neighborhoods have friends, family friends that grandparents knew, a support network where doors are not closed and people can come and go, like a large get-together.
- Large family businesses are desirable, where family members help each other out.
- Some cultures are not used to calling people by name, but addressing them with respect, being aware of their rank.
- It feels as though we are too time oriented, schedules too incremental.
- Too much paperwork is required. This takes too long. Approvals are needed from different departments.
- Families are scattered, not one unit anymore.
- People are made to feel they are being pitied.
- People want to be left alone to learn and discover for themselves instead of asking for help.
- People don't rely on the government or the law and are not familiar with procedures.

Needs Assessment

Before beginning a program with limited resource farmers, determine what their needs are. Ask yourself:

- Is the program needed?
- Will it improve the income/value of the farm and conserve the land?
- Are agency staff members well enough acquainted with the area and the individual operation to judge the needs?
- What are the needs of the farm operation as seen through the eyes of the farmer?

Every agricultural agency has specific mandates, programs, and services that it is expected to perform or provide. This is well understood by agency staffs, and their lines of responsibility in most cases are clear. Occasionally there are gray areas and sometimes duplication among agency programs. At times this has caused antagonism between the providers, which is not beneficial to an agency or a farmer. If we turn the situation around and view it from the perspective of limited resource farmers, conditions become the opposite of what is intended, resulting in confusion and a lack of knowledge about which agency does what and how they should be contacted.

Part of the problem is that the services provided by certain established programs do not match the needs of individual farms or groups of farms. In order to be of assistance, the agriculture agency has to understand the farmer's needs and circumstances and the farmer must understand how the agency can be of help. A successful program will provide the services and information that will fill those needs. Developing such a program, in most cases, requires time and effort. There are a number of techniques available.

- Study family and farm characteristic information provided in the general and agricultural census.
- Consult studies by land grant universities, USDA, and others.
- Conduct surveys, either by mail or by meeting with farmers. Talking directly with farmers is usually more productive, but the interviewers need to have experience and be trained. Techniques vary.
- Observe farms and farmers in your area. Over time a great deal of reliable information can be obtained by the professional worker from his own and others' careful observations.
- Talk to and interview knowledgeable people. In any community, many people know limited resource farmers, have worked with them, had business transactions with them, taught their children. This is probably the quickest way to get information and if gathered and used objectively is a good source.
- Contact the farmers directly. This is the best source of information. Its only drawback is that it is time-consuming so you can actually contact only a small percentage of limited resource farmers.

In considering the problem of gathering information there are two fundamentally divergent approaches, the social indicator approach and the self-report approach. The first approach assumes that needs are unknown and the task is to measure how well they are being met in comparison with the norm. The second approach assumes that needs are known and understood by the group but need to be articulated to the providers.

Statements from USDA Agency Staff Working with Hispanic Limited Resource Farmers

- Educate the contacts about the services and information that you can provide.
- Begin to deliver information and services that illustrate to your new contact that you indeed have valuable services that can assist them. A common way to do this is to help them solve a problem or make a valuable contact.
- Continue to work closely with the clientele and respond in a timely fashion to any inquiries they may have (in other words, bend over backwards to assist them).
- Develop an educational program that meets their needs (i.e., newsletter articles in their language, bilingual meetings, etc.). The information should be geared to **their** particular problems.
- Institutionalize your outreach efforts (i.e., have a yearly bilingual meeting, or a bi-monthly bilingual newsletter).
- Continue to reach out to new members of the community so that you are able to expand your base of clientele contacts and not be perceived as assisting just a few individuals.
- Identify people who can deliver the information requested—individuals who have the technical competence, as well as social and educational skills, to deliver information effectively.
- Select the time, place, and sequence of delivering the information with the proper materials. Make the place and time convenient to the audience desired.
- Seek the cooperation of other individuals who have done this locally.
- Be careful how you phrase information. Language has to be active, simple, and to the point. Farmers respond to positive economic changes. It has to be clear that they will stand to gain when they improve (for instance) their irrigation systems.
- People change at different rates. These rates are influenced by institutions, communities, neighbors, families, and social psychological forces. Also, changes are not always linear, positive, or permanent.
- We need to know with whom we are dealing, their likes and dislikes, language, educational level, pressure points, what they respond to, their needs, and barriers, social or cultural. To do this we need to identify the people who market their crops, buy seed, fertilizer, etc. from, and pepper them with information in their language.
- For example, irrigation improvement programs administered by NRCS require plan approval and work quotations by contractors. In the past, when half of the cost was paid by government and this knowledge became known, in many cases the cost immediately inflated. In some cases the farmer's cost was as great as if there had been no cost sharing.
- Another example is the highly competitive drive of many Hispanic farmers to be the best in what they do. This can work both ways; it can be a deterrent or a motivator for change. Each farmer competes with a group of farmers but at different levels or tiers. It is as though Farmer X says to himself that he can't possibly compete with Farmer Y, given his level of resources, but, by golly, he is going to be the best within the group of farmers with similar conditions with whom he may interact on a daily basis. Changing here can be dangerous if success does not follow. The desire to belong is also important.

Fitting the Program to the Farmer

Programs designed for limited resource farmers have to be affordable. To promote or advocate practices not affordable or feasible to limited resource farmers will be detrimental both to them and the community.

Don't just assume that you know the clientele, their understanding of what you have to offer, or their farm capabilities and conservation needs.

Go over the checklist after you plan your program. Make sure your program fits your clientele's needs.

Educational Approaches

Keep in mind these few ideas and your project will have a chance for success:

- Choose the most effective approach for the best results.
- Plan your presentation and adapt it to your audience, both in language and content.
- Take care to phrase information appropriately.
- Keep communication active, simple, and to the point.
- Make suggestions practical and within the frames of reference of the farmers.
- Make it clear that the farmers will gain from the practice or improvement—farmers respond to positive economic changes.
- Make demonstrations appropriate so they will be effective.
- Carefully plan your involvement with a new group. Business-as-usual—programs that worked in the past—may not work with a new group.

All groups do not respond to offers of outside technical assistance. A study of strawberry growers in the coastal areas of California among Anglo, Japanese and Hispanic growers showed that Hispanics were least likely to be contacted or influenced by agency professionals. This was due partly to their own cultural patterns of seeking advice mainly through family channels. Hispanics expressed a deep mistrust of anyone from the government. Extension advisors were accepted more readily when they drove private and unmarked cars. Traditional methods must be changed or modified to be effective in these circumstances.

A number of educational techniques are standard in working with farmers. After using these standard techniques with limited resource Hispanic and Southeast Asian farmers, we evaluated them and found the most successful (in descending order) are:

Individual Farmer Visits

The individual farmer visit is still the most productive method for getting individual results. We are not talking about the casual drop-in, but a visit that is based on a direct request or an observed problem where problem solving information has been conveyed.

Radio and Television

A somewhat surprising development has been the success of Spanish speaking radio and television in getting out announcements and information. In the evaluation of a number of programs, radio and TV have proven far more successful than any of the written methods.

Field Demonstrations

Field demonstrations, the core of USDA education, are successful with limited resource farmers. But places and resources to conduct demonstrations such as crop trials are not always available on an operator's farm, due to lack of land and economics. Demonstrations at experiment stations solve this problem.

Project Advisory Groups

Inviting limited resource farmers to become members of advisory councils or committees is beneficial for both the farmers and the professionals who are extending knowledge, because the farmers are directly involved in decision making. Knowledge transfer occurs in both directions—the professional learns as well as the farmer. One difficulty which is more acute with limited resource farmers is the amount of time and expense involved in participating on committees. In most cases, the farmer is not only the manager, but also a farm worker. Time for outside activities is limited and expensive for him. The professional has to work around the problem.

Educational Events

Educational events held for specific ethnic groups have proven successful. Meetings in conjunction with marketing and service company demonstrations and displays have been even more productive.

Newsletters

Newsletters are widely used with agricultural clientele as the main method of information delivery. With limited resource farmers this has not been very successful because many of these operators do not read. Newsletters are most successful when printed in both English and Spanish, using a double column format, with both languages on the same page.

News Stories

News stories are used occasionally, when a newsworthy activity has occurred or when a publication becomes interested in developing a special interest article. These events do not happen often.

Program Resources and Methods

It is essential to have appropriate program resources, including creative ideas for working with limited resource farmers.

Personnel

The employees of an agency working with limited resource farmers are the most important program resource, whether they be specialists, para-professionals, support staff, or contract employees. Working with limited resource farmers requires people who are sensitive, open-minded, committed, skilled, and patient. Personnel working with limited resource farmers will be exposed to different cultures and languages. If they project professionalism, competence, and confidence, the clientele's confidence in them will be boosted and the project will have a better chance to succeed.

If funding is available and there are enough limited resource farmers to justify additional staff, a bilingual professional would be most productive. Such a specialist can help overcome social and communication barriers. The second most valuable staff addition would be a para-professional. In some cases a translator might be needed.

Without these additional staff members, the agency's professional must become trained and be willing to put forth the extra effort needed to reach the clientele. This training will be necessary to assist in overcoming communication and social barriers.

Ideas for Working with Limited Resource Farmers

For most limited resource farmers, working with your agency will be a new experience. You'll need to be sensitive and patient with people who are not familiar with you or your program. Education should be your number one priority. Tailor your educational program to the limited resource farmers. If efforts in education are successful, future problems with communication and social barriers may be kept at a minimum.

Communication is vital. If they understand you and you understand them, problems will be solved faster and progress and success may occur at an earlier stage in the project. Their inability to communicate does not mean that they do not want to learn or to improve their lifestyles. Most immigrants invest their life savings in their farms. Their farms are probably their most important source of income. They want to farm effectively and increase their profits just like any other farmer.

Trust between personnel and clientele is essential. It is human nature to be fearful or cautious in unfamiliar situations. If limited resource farmers are new to the country, they may be overwhelmed with the new culture and the language. Clientele need to trust agency personnel in order to ask for help and to actually implement the projects recommended. Without that trust, you may not be able to complete the project.

Choose problems to address that are within the farmers' economic capabilities. Remember, their bottom line is profit.

Patience is another important factor when working with limited resource farmers. Improvement and progress may be slow, but will happen over time. Initial goals and objectives should not be set too high. Within each community, there are different meanings for progress and improvement. What may be considered important progress to one community may be of little concern to another. Just give the project time for the community to absorb and study the ideas. Allow them to see the progress themselves. Seeing is believing.

The same standards should not be set across the spectrum of all groups and communities. There should be some basic standards set by the agency and different objectives and goals for each new project or group with whom you work. Each community has its own pace.

Educational Materials

You should have special educational materials such as publications, audio and video tapes, and special equipment for demonstrations, special presentations, and other educational events. Sometimes equipment must be adapted and specialized for small operations.

The content and language of materials need to be specific to the audience, since all Hispanic groups are not the same and there are a number of distinct Asian communities. These groups do not all come from the same place. Experiences and farming techniques are different. Consideration should be given to these facts when preparing or adopting educational materials.

Demonstrations

Demonstrations can be an effective method to eliminate fear and doubt. Show the limited resource farmers how the project will be implemented and allow them to see each step of the project. With an effective demonstration, the recommendations may be welcomed more easily.

On larger, well established farms, land and equipment for demonstrations is often furnished by the farm operator. Funding is often provided by commodity groups and commercial businesses. Limited resource farmers, in most cases, do not have adequate land or equipment to provide for demonstration plots, and many times do not belong or participate in commodity or business organizations. This condition makes it necessary for the agency personnel to find other alternatives, such as:

- Use of experiment station land.
- Cooperation with larger operators.
- Additional funding through special programs.
- Development of special equipment through purchase or designing and building. (This has been done with spraying and chemical treatment equipment.)

Outside Resources

Other agencies have specialists and staff involved with the Hispanic and Asian communities who are indigenous to the group and fluent in their languages. It is especially productive to involve them when developing programs for limited resource farmers.

Contact:

- State, USDA and other federal agencies.
- Universities and colleges, community colleges, in addition to the Land Grant institutions.
- Non-profit organizations working with ethnic groups.
- The private sector, marketing, sales, and financial institutions.

Timing

Timing is crucial to the operation of a farm. Meetings, educational events, and demonstrations should be scheduled according to the farmers' convenience to ensure maximum participation and success of the project. The time to start and complete projects should be scheduled around the farms' operations, the cropping season, and the convenience of the audience. Their religious holidays and traditional events should be taken into account.

Concepts of time may differ from community to community. Whereas one culture may value promptness, another may not respond in the same way. Knowing what to expect is helpful.

Pay attention to the sequence of delivering the information, as well as to the appropriateness of it.

A project can be a help or a burden, depending on its timing.

Evaluation

If you don't know where you've been, you probably won't know where you're going.

To be effective, you need to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of your program. You must be aware of the progress the program is making toward achieving the goals and objectives you set out. Two effective ways of evaluation are:

- Response from the clientele.
- Observation over time by the one delivering the program.

The evaluation plan should have a series of steps such as: establishment of contact, mutual understanding or communication, needs assessment or acknowledgment, establishment of a trust relationship, project acceptance, project implementation, and results of project (in acres, dollars, etc.).

With the mainstream clientele most of these steps have been accomplished and are taken for granted. With the new clientele each step is necessary, therefore the evaluation process must be an ongoing effort.

It is important that supervisors and administrators recognize the realities of working with limited resource farmers so that in their evaluations of the professionals, credit and encouragement can be given as the program progresses through its various steps. It takes time; sometimes a long time.

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